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Report to CAS Students to Keene Contemplative

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Karolyn Kinane
Report to the College of Arts and Sciences
Professional development funding
May 1, 2017

Purpose: Students, alumni and faculty present at the 38th Annual Medieval and Renaissance Forum

Project: Contemplative Education: Impacts, Outcomes, Transformations

Location: Keene, NH

Dates: April 21-22, 2017

Presenters: Karolyn Kinane (Faculty), Lindsey DeRoche ('17), John Rodgers ('18), Rachael Ferranti ('12), Jessica Eldridge ('16)



John Rodgers, Rachael Ferranti, Karolyn Kinane, Lindsey DeRoche, Jessica Eldridge at the 38th Annual Medieval and Renaissance Forum, Keene, NH

This trip was an opportunity for Plymouth State students and alumni to communicate the value and impact of their Liberal Arts education to a broader audience. Students synthesized course experiences, content, theories, and practices to deliver first-person accounts of transformative education in the discipline of English. This panel contributed to scholarship on the role and value of both the Liberal Arts and contemplative approaches to education. It also built a sense of community between past and present students and among students and faculty.

I asked the participants to send me three or four sentences about their experiences for this report.

John Rodgers ('17) Presentation: "Questing for Purpose"

While attending the Medieval Renaissance Forum at Keene State College, I was given the unique opportunity to write and reflect upon my time in British Literature with Karolyn Kinane and then present it to a new audience made up of medievalists from all over the country. The experience gave me insight to a scholarly community, and taught me about the often surprising ways Medieval Studies is relevant and powerful today.

Our panel was well-received by the audience with great enthusiasm. I got many comments that we represented to school in a very character-driven and professional manner.

Opportunities to practice public speaking are great for professional development. Also, we clearly conveyed to the audience how our literature programs at Plymouth State not only taught their students well, but encouraged us to spread the knowledge and apply it in other instances in life. Thank you for this opportunity!

Rachael Ferranti ('12) Presentation: "Can my Sins come to Church?"

Having been graduated from Plymouth State University for about five years now, and two years into a new career, my opportunities to apply my analytical, close reading, interpretative skills to a work of literature are few and far between these days. Often I crave the mental exercises of intense processing, reflecting, critiquing, and transforming meaning of a text, exercises that I was so accustomed to practicing as a student through frequent writing and discussion.

When Dr. Kinane invited me to present in the 38th Annual Medieval and Renaissance Forum, I lunged at the opportunity because I knew it would allow me to wear my old student hat again, if even for a few weeks. I turned to a beloved text from my undergraduate days, *Paradise Lost*, but this time with a more contemplative focus per our panel's theme. Revisiting the text, its lasting significance in my life, and my old academic self all at once was an immensely comforting experience that is bittersweet to see come to an end. Participating in the Forum proved to me how deeply the lessons and materials from my undergraduate are rooted within me, and allowed me to invite these teachings into my present. I am grateful for my time at Plymouth State and very grateful for this opportunity to reconnect.

Lindsey DeRoche ('18) Presentation: "Mysticism and Interconnectedness"

After weeks of revising the paper for my first experience giving a scholarly presentation, I had the privilege of accompanying peers and professors to the 38th annual Medieval and Renaissance Forum at Keene State College. I was extremely apprehensive before I spoke, but found, once I took the podium, that my fear dissipated. I gained more confidence regarding speaking in front of strangers, and enjoyed the talks I attended, where many scholars connected the present to texts from the past. I relished in the enjoyment of socializing and traveling with a classmate, alums, and professors in a personal setting, where we could be our most authentic selves. It was a pleasure to speak about contemplative pedagogies, which have done so much for me, with people whom I hold in such high esteem. Thank you for supporting students in this way!

Jessica Eldridge ('16) Presentation: "Resistance, Persistence, and Transformative Education"

Attending my first academic conference, I was surprised at the deeply personal comradery I observed that bound a multiple-generational and dimensional community of medieval scholars and enthusiasts.

Having barely studied medieval literature, my voice and discussion was comparatively amateur. But I had the pleasure of meeting Dr. Christine Axen who shared with me the etymology of 'amateur,' whose meaning is rooted in love. Illuminating!

I enjoyed hearing the academic talks of medieval scholars deeply devoted to study of texts not distanced from them, along with the more intimate conversations I shared with my smaller community of PSU peers and professors, with whom I am now more deeply connected. Thank you for this challenge and this opportunity.